

Message Text

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ACTION AGRE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8438

USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS VALLETTA 02772

USDOC FOR OFFICE OF FIELD OPERATIONS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, BDIS, MT

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA CORNED BEEF

REF: STATE 209991

1. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN INFORMED THAT SEVERAL LOCAL LEADING IMPORTERS HAVE ORDERED A TOTAL OF ABOUT US \$250,000 WORTH OF ARGENTINIAN CORNED BEEF PRODUCED BY EST. 1964, THROUGH FOSTER IMPORTING CO. OF 633 THIRD AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. TEL: (212)986-6585. LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES WILL NOT ALLOW IMPORTATION OF THIS MERCHANDISE UNLESS IT IS PROVED THAT, AT THE TIME OF PRODUCTION, SUBJECT CORNED BEEF WAS CONSIDERED TO BE FIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION IN THE USA. ACCORDING TO ONE OF THE MALTESE IMPORTERS INVOLVED, USDA OFFICIAL DR. STEINMATZ, INFORMED MALTESE HEALTH DEPARTMENT (THROUGH MALTA EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON) THAT EST. 1964 WAS NOT ALLOWED TO EXPORT TO US BETWEEN APRIL AND AUGUST 16, 1978. MOST OF THE CORNED BEEF IN QUESTION WAS REPORTEDLY PRODUCED DURING THIS PERIOD.

2. DURING PURCHASE NEGOTIATIONS, FOSTER HAD ASSURED MALTESE IMPORTERS THAT SUBJECT CORNED BEEF WAS APPROVED FOR EXPORT TO US AND, TO COMPLY WITH LETTER OF CREDIT CONDITIONS, UNCLASSIFIED

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FOSTER HAD PRODUCED CERTIFICATE FROM ARGENTINIAN HEALTH AUTHORITIES TO PROVE THIS. DESPITE KNOWLEDGE OF THESE ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES, LOCAL BANK CANNOT WITHHOLD PAYMENT TO FOSTER. LOCAL FIRMS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE REQUESTED EMBASSY'S ASSISTANCE IN RESOLVING SUBJECT MATTER.

3. ACTIONS REQUESTED: FOR USDA: TO ANSWER QUERIES BY LOCAL

BUSINESSMEN, THE EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF USDA COULD FURNISH THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON SUBJECT MATTER ASAP: (A) WHEN WAS EST. 1964'S LICENSE TO EXPORT CORNED BEEF TO US REVOKED AND WHY; (B) IS THIS DECISION STILL IN EFFECT AND, (C) IF NOT, WHEN WAS LICENSE RESTORED.

FOR COMMERCE: FROM AVAILABLE INFORMATION, IT APPEARS THAT FOSTER MAY HAVE KNOWINGLY EXPORTED GOODS NOT FIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION IN THE US AND PRODUCED DOCUMENTS TO THE CONTRARY. THE EMBASSY REQUESTS USDOC NY DISTRICT OFFICE'S ASSISTANCE TO CLARIFY FACTS AND HELP SOLVE MATTER ASAP. EMBASSY IS OBTAINING RELEVANT DOCUMENTS, INCLUDING EXCHANGE OF TELEX MESSAGES BETWEEN LOCAL IMPORTERS AND FOSTER IMPORTING CO. AND WILL TRANSMIT SAME TO USDOC BY AIR POUCH. IN THE MEANTIME, WE REQUEST THE NY DISTRICT OFFICE TO LOOK INTO THIS MATTER ASAP. WILSON

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